

District Improvement Plan for the Northampton Public Schools

Presented to the Northampton School Committee

July 9, 2015



Background: The Northampton Public Schools District Improvement Plan (DIP) is presented as the culmination of a year-long examination of district conditions for learning. It was preceded by the publication of *Entry Findings and Root Cause Analysis*. The 2015-2020 DIP was developed by a committee of 35 teachers, administrators, parents, School Committee members and community partners over the course of 5 meetings held during the months of May and June of 2015. The DIP articulates a set of strategies designed to address pressing issues identified in the *Root Cause Analysis* document.

District Improvement Plan Committee

Name	Role	Affiliation
John Provost	Superintendent	Northampton Public Schools
Blue DuVal	School Committee Member	Northampton Public Schools
Laura Fallon	School Committee Member	Northampton Public Schools
Ann Hennessey	School Committee Member	Northampton Public Schools
Gwen Agna	Principal	Jackson Street School
Sandra Alton	Special Education Teacher	Leeds Elementary School
Barbara Black	Associate Director or Early Childhood Education	Northampton Public Schools
Kathie Bredin	4th Grade Teacher	Jackson Street School
Jason Berg	NEF Board Member	NEF
Kathy Casale	School Psychologist	Northampton Public Schools
Nancy Cheevers	Director of Curriculum and Assessment	Northampton Public Schools
Mary Cowhey	Title I Teacher (Math)	Jackson Street School
Sue Crago	English Teacher	Northampton High School
Mary Curtin	Parent	Ryan Road Elementary School
Rachel Ellis	ELL Teacher	Ryan Road Elementary School
Susan Etheredge	Director, Department of Education and Child Study	Smith College
Laurie Farkas	Director of Student Services	Northampton Public Schools
Holly Graham	English Teacher	JFK Middle School
Gwen Hawk	Directory of Education	PCDC/Head Start
Deborah Keisch	Parent	Bridge Street School
Maria Lala	Parent	Jackson Street School
Lisa Leary	Art Teacher	Northampton High School
Bryan Lombardi	Principal	Northampton High School
Kathy Malynoski	Head Teacher	Jackson Street School
Celeste Malvezzi	Associate Principal	Northampton High School
Jason Mark	Parent	Leeds Elementary School
Kate Natale	Educational Support Professional	Leeds Elementary School
Marie Polizzi	Parent	Jackson Street School
Kimm Quinlan	Parent	JFK Middle/Northampton High
Debra Rejniak	Nurse	Northampton Public Schools
Gaby Richard-Harrington	Assistive Technology Specialist	Northampton Public Schools
Carol Ruyffelaert	4th Grade Teacher	Bridge Street School
Julie Spencer-Robinson	President	Northampton Association of School Employees
Maria Sperduti	Community Member/Educator	Northampton
Rachel Stavely Hale	Math Teacher	Northampton High School
Lesley Wilson	Principal	JFK Middle School

Theory of Action

If we implement an evidence-based universal home visit program at specific grade levels, then teachers will become more aware of and knowledgeable about how families use language at home and have an increased understanding of the whole child in their cultural context. This will help families to feel welcome and supported at school as well as encourage teachers to engage students using the language they have in order to access more complex tasks at school. This will begin to close the opportunity/experience gap.

Goal 1: Relationships with Families		
Strategic Objectives		
Implement research-based teacher home visit program	Provide anti-bias training	Develop, build, and maintain trust between teachers and families
Strategic Initiatives		
Identify groups of educators and volunteers interested in doing home visits.	Provide ongoing anti-bias PD for educators (learn to recognize and value different ways of speaking, learning, knowing, thinking, doing).	Implement public relations campaign to promote home visit program.
Research home visit models; develop PD.	Create safe, supportive environment for educators to debrief and reflect on home visits, relationships with families, and their own biases; share info with colleagues as appropriate.	Include parent leaders in process – development, outreach and PD.
	Provide PD on how to build relationships with families and incorporate what we learn into curriculum and instruction.	

Theory of Action Continued

If we implement an evidence-based universal home visit program at specific grade levels, then teachers will become more aware of and knowledgeable about how families use language at home and have an increased understanding of the whole child in their cultural context. This will help families to feel welcome and supported at school as well as encourage teachers to engage students using the language they have in order to access more complex tasks at school. This will begin to close the opportunity/experience gap.

Goal 2: Complex Academic Language Development		
Strategic Objectives		
Strategic Initiatives		
Observe in-home language use	Increase understanding of the whole child in the child's cultural context.	Increase understanding of language and literacy development.
Develop observation/reflection protocol as follow-up to home visits.	Take ownership of all students, regardless of special education, ELL, or socioeconomic status and tap into their funds of knowledge.	ESL teachers lead workshops for educators - presenting WIDA framework – including authentic assessment and multiliteracies.
Create ongoing professional learning communities (PLCs) in which educators can share and reflect. (Note connection to goal 3.)	Develop mechanisms for building teams of educators across disciplines that can collaborate about shared students.	Develop protocol for teachers to reflect on use of WIDA at department or grade-level meetings.

Theory of Action

If we provide systemic collaborative structures and support systems that allow educators to meet new demands and expectations, they will improve instruction, develop individual and collective efficacy, and achieve professional satisfaction, which in turn will improve learning for all students.

Goal 3: Systemic Collaborative Structures and Supports	
Strategic Objectives	
Improve instruction	To develop and improve individual and collective efficacy
Strategic Initiatives	
Provide teachers with written curriculum including differentiated instructional lessons and strategies. (Legacy Initiative)	Improve existing research-based mentoring program in accordance with current state guidelines to increase the competency and confidence of new teachers
Provide teachers with an effective RTI program. (Legacy Initiative also connected to goal 7)	Improve the district's teacher evaluation system to create a meaningful, timely, intentional, and manageable process.
Continue to develop site-based PD to support research-based best practices, especially differentiated instruction.(Legacy Initiative)	Structure time during the school day for individual and collaborative reflection to use data to inform instruction for all students and to thoughtfully meet the professional standards for teaching. (Note connection to goal 2.)
Create schedules/structures to support collaboration with ESPs, interventionists, grade level colleagues, vertical teams, special educators, subject area teachers, etc. (Note connection to Goal 6.)	Collaboratively design and continually refine written curriculum.
	Implement and refine coaching program.
	Create structures to provide teachers with opportunities to observe effective practice.

Theory of Action

If we move through a process where all constituencies of the district develop a set of core values and a shared vision and from those values and vision develop unifying areas of focus, then the district will use those shared values and focus in responding to conflicting accountabilities.

Goal 4: Analysis of Subjective Viewpoints Concerning the District		
Strategic Objectives		
Identify target constituencies	Collect subjective data	Analyze subjective data
Strategic Initiatives		
Identify target constituencies within the district (i.e. students, school personnel, parents).	Develop materials to explain process and obtain informed consent.	Identify factors that explain the sources of variance among the sorts.
Work with community partners to identify target constituencies outside of the district (i.e. business owners, residents, non-residents).	Gather educational value statements from target constituencies.	Characterize the factors.
	Develop statement set for sorting.	Compare demographics of matching participants for each factor.
	Have participants sort statements.	

Theory of Action Continued

If we move through a process where all constituencies of the district develop a set of core values and a shared vision and from those values and vision develop unifying areas of focus, then the district will use those shared values and focus in responding to conflicting accountabilities.

Goal 5: Value-oriented Decision Making		
Strategic Objectives		
Develop Policies	Align Curriculum	Prioritize Budget
Strategic Initiatives		
Building-based constituencies hold discussions to consider how their school will embody the values in curriculum, policies, and budget.	ALT members facilitate a conversation on how the individual concepts can be brought together in a common set of priorities.	Superintendent presents to SC and public a shared vision made up of three district areas of priority - policy, curriculum, budget for the purpose of value-oriented decision making.

Theory of Action

If we intentionally align our thinking and decision making to a district model, keeping all students at the center, and execute coherent actions based on research, data, collaboration and best practice, then every student will have an equitable and high quality pre K – 12 educational experience and will show social and academic growth.

Goal 6: Horizontal and Vertical Alignment	
Strategic Objectives	
Strategic Initiatives	
Establish a decision-making process with a pre K - 12 lens.	Create systems for communication and collaboration between and amongst levels and schools.
Ensure equity and access to resources. (Note connection to goal 7.)	Replicate best practices for core instruction.
Implement consistent curriculum for academic and social/emotional programming. (Note connection to goal 3.)	Develop organizational structures for vertical and horizontal teaming. (Note connection to goal 3.)
Practice systematic data collection and identify best practices. (Note connection to goal 9.)	Create and implement vertical record keeping systems related to student achievement. (Note connection to goal 9.)
Develop a process for clearly articulating decisions. (Note connection to goal 7.)	Provide structures and support for vertical programming in non-core subjects (ex., district-wide art show, pre K-12 science fair, etc.).
Establish norms for accountability (Note connection to goal 7.)	

Theory of Action Continued

If we intentionally align our thinking and decision making to a district model, keeping all students at the center, and execute coherent actions based on research, data, collaboration and best practice, then every student will have an equitable and high quality pre K – 12 educational experience and will show social and academic growth.

Goal 7: Cultivate a Unified Mindset	
Strategic Objectives	
Strategic Initiatives	
Foster a perspective within the community for focusing on what is best for educating all students	Model a coherent district approach for educating all students
Create a system for engaging community stakeholders. (Note connection to goal 8.)	Administrative Leadership Team establishes and models a norm for pre K - 12 thinking, decision making, and communication. (Note connection to goal 6.)
Design and promote a unified message.	Distribute resources equitably (Note connection to goal 6.)
Celebrate and showcase successes pre K - 12.	Establish a universal approach to RTI. (Note connection to goal 2.)
	Establish a universal approach for collecting, analyzing, and using data. (Note connection to goal 9.)

Theory of Action

If we have a focused, data-driven, and flexible process to prioritize challenges and opportunities to which we commit time and resources and which involves appropriate stakeholders in a respective and realistic way, then we will establish a culture of continuous improvement and empower our educators and students to grow and respond in interactive, safe, and accountable ways, and the district will be able to reach its full potential.

Goal 8: Effective Decision Making Process		
Strategic Objectives		
Identify areas of most critical need	Involve stakeholders	Use data intelligently
Strategic Initiatives		
Develop a system to prioritize initiatives, threats and opportunities in a timely and transparent manner. (scorecard/ rubric/scale?)	Systematically collect and prioritize feedback.	Gather relevant data, for example: exit interviews, district and school reviews, standardized tests, enrollment numbers, surveys.
Identify and collect input from Stakeholders. (Note Connection to Goal 7.)	Support for communication of smart decision making.	Have systems to efficiently collect stakeholder input. (Note Connection to Goal 7.)
Set a smart timeline for each initiative and hold decision makers accountable for timely decision making	Public communication of resource allocation.	Explain cost/benefit and impact in regards to time, money, students, teachers and educational community. Is it a critical need?
Create system to support collection and sharing of appropriate data.	Allocate resources (people's time) for staying on top of best practices, including learning from peers.	
Develop a language for the district to use which communicates correctly. For example: We feel it's important to invest (time/money) in (initiative) in order to (what key metric will improve). And a language to reply: Not doing this risks (bad thing). Risks include (risks here).	Have a clear, well supported, system for all members of the school community to bring up issues and get timely response. Allow members of educational community to provide feedback, concerns, opinion through surveys, email, forums, etc.	
	Communicate data and thought process. People might not agree, but at least they understand the process. Communicate the initiatives that we're doing, including successes and smart failures.	
	Identify key decision maker.	

Theory of Action

If we systematically collect, analyze and share meaningful qualitative and quantitative data throughout pre K-12, utilizing multiple measures of assessment including teacher-created benchmark tests, then educators and administrators will learn to use data to promote student learning and provide a more equitable allocation of resources, and we will see increased collaboration in curriculum writing and assessment and a more universal experience for students travelling through the Northampton Public Schools.

Goal 9: Data Systems		
Strategic Objectives		
Strategic Initiatives		
Create a single database in Aspen for all relevant student data.	Identify relevant student data.	Utilize data analytics to put student information into a useful, visual format.
Utilize Aspen to its capacity! Track student data horizontally and vertically. (Note connection to goal 6.) Consider hiring an Aspen programmer on a temporary basis to create this database.	Name and agree on relevant data represented by multiple measures. Possibilities include: BAS – Benchmark Assessment AIMS Web MCAS scores 3-10 DDMs Teacher benchmarks Writing samples with common rubrics Attendance District-wide core values/habits of mind Basic Title I Assessment Consider creating/implementing and evaluating students on district-wide core values/habits of mind K-12 (such as the CC Math Practice standards http://www.corestandards.org/Math/Practice/	Format student data for teachers' daily use. Work with teachers to collect and analyze data on a daily basis to inform instruction. (Note connection to goal 7.) Work on student goal setting. Consider data walls (<i>not</i> public displays). Consider Individual Learning Plans for all students to give them ownership of their own learning, progress, and goal setting.

Theory of Action Continued

If we systematically collect, analyze and share meaningful qualitative and quantitative data throughout pre K-12, utilizing multiple measures of assessment including teacher-created benchmark tests, then educators and administrators will learn to use data to promote student learning and provide a more equitable allocation of resources, and we will see increased collaboration in curriculum writing and assessment and a more universal experience for students travelling through the Northampton Public Schools.

Goal 10: Data Use		
Strategic Objectives		
Use data to inform distribution of school resources	Identify data protocols	Use data to inform homework and grading practices
Strategic Initiatives		
Research how funds are currently distributed.	Provide teachers with PD on meaningful data analysis and usage.	Consider standards-based grading K-12.
Tie funds to data/direct funds based on needs.	Re-work schedules across the district to make collaboration around data a core value.	Vertically align expectations of what skills and habits of mind students should have at each grade level.
		Vertically align homework practices.

Work Plan 2015-2016

Goals to Complete	Implement RTI (Legacy), Cultivate a Unified Mindset, Develop Data Systems
Related Initiatives	<p>Establish a universal approach to RTI.</p> <p>Provide teachers with an effective RTI program.</p> <p>Establish a universal approach for collecting, analyzing, and using data.</p> <p>Create a system for engaging all stakeholders.</p> <p>Design and promote a unified message.</p> <p>Celebrate and showcase successes pre K-12.</p> <p>Administrative Leadership Team establishes and models a norm for pre K-12 thinking, decision making, and communication.</p> <p>Ensure equity to access to resources.</p> <p>Utilize Aspen to its capacity! Track student data horizontally and vertically.</p> <p>Consider hiring an Aspen programmer on a temporary basis to create this database.</p> <p>Name and agree on relevant data represented by multiple measures.</p> <p>Format student data for teachers' daily use.</p> <p>Work with teachers to collect and analyze data on a daily basis to inform instruction.</p> <p>Consider data walls (not public displays).</p> <p>Consider Individual Learning Plans for all students to give them ownership of their own learning, progress, and goal setting.</p> <p>Identify and collect data from stakeholders.</p> <p>Create system to support collection and sharing of appropriate data.</p>

Work Plan 2015-2016

Goals to Begin/Continue	Curriculum Writing, Differentiated Instruction, Relationships with Families, Complex Academic Language Development, Systemic Collaborative Structures and Supports, Analysis of Subjective Viewpoints Concerning the District, Value-oriented Decision Making, Horizontal and Vertical Alignment, Effective Decision Making Process, Data Use
Related Initiatives	<p>Research home visit models; develop PD.</p> <p>ESL teachers lead workshops on WIDA framework.</p> <p>Continue PD on Differentiated Instruction.</p> <p>Identify target constituencies within and outside of the district.</p> <p>Develop materials to explain process and obtain consent.</p> <p>Draw statements from constituencies.</p> <p>Develop statement set.</p> <p>Sort statements.</p> <p>Establish norms for accountability.</p> <p>Gather relevant data, for example: exit interviews, district and school reviews, standardized tests, enrollment numbers, surveys.</p> <p>Have systems to efficiently collect stakeholder input.</p> <p>Have a clear, well supported, system for all members of the school community to bring up issues and get timely responses. Allow members of educational community to provide feedback, concerns, opinion through surveys, email, forums, etc.</p> <p>Implement and refine coaching program.</p> <p>Collaboratively design and continually refine written curriculum.</p> <p>Research how funds are currently distributed.</p>

Work Plan 2016-2017

Goals to Complete	Differentiated Instruction, Analysis of Subjective Viewpoints Concerning the District, Effective Decision Making Process
Related Initiatives	<p>Complete PD on Differentiated Instruction.</p> <p>Identify factors that explain the sources of variance among the sorts.</p> <p>Characterize the factors.</p> <p>Compare demographics of matching participants for each factor.</p> <p>Building-based constituencies hold discussions to consider how their school will embody the values in curriculum, policies, and budget.</p> <p>Develop a system to prioritize initiatives, threats and opportunities in a timely and transparent manner. (scorecard/ rubric/scale?)</p> <p>Develop a language for the district to use which communicates correctly. For example: We feel it's important to invest (time/money) in (initiative) in order to (what key metric will improve). And a language to reply: Not doing this risks (bad thing). Risks include (risks here).</p> <p>Systematically collect and prioritize feedback.</p> <p>Public communication of resource allocation.</p> <p>Allocate resources (people's time) for staying on top of best practices and learning from peers.</p> <p>Communicate data and thought process. People might not agree, but at least they understand the process. Communicate the initiatives that we're doing, including successes and smart failures.</p> <p>Develop a process for clearly articulating decisions.</p> <p>Explain cost/benefit and impact in regards to time, money, students, teachers and educational community. Is it a critical need?</p>

Work Plan 2016-2017

Goals to Begin/Continue	Curriculum Writing, Relationships with Families, Complex Academic Language Development, Systemic Collaborative Structures and Supports, Value-oriented Decision Making, Horizontal and Vertical Alignment, Data Use
Related Initiatives	<p>Identify groups of educators and volunteers interested in doing home visits.</p> <p>Provide PD on how to build relationships with families and incorporate what we learn into curriculum and instruction.</p> <p>Develop protocol for teachers to reflect on and use WIDA at department or grade-level meetings.</p> <p>Improve existing research-based mentoring program in accordance with current state guidelines to increase the competency and confidence of new teachers.</p> <p>Provide teachers with PD on meaningful data analysis and usage.</p> <p>Collaboratively design and continually refine written curriculum.</p>

Work Plan 2017-2018

Goals to Complete	Complex Academic Language Development, Value-oriented Decision Making, Horizontal and Vertical Alignment
Related Initiatives	<p>Develop observation/reflection protocol as follow-up to home visits.</p> <p>Create ongoing professional learning communities (PLCs) in which educators can share and reflect.</p> <p>Take ownership of all students, regardless of special education, ELL, or socioeconomic status and tap into their funds of knowledge.</p> <p>Develop mechanisms for building teams of educators across disciplines that can collaborate about shared students.</p> <p>ALT members facilitate a conversation on how the individual concepts can be brought together in a common set of priorities.</p> <p>Superintendent presents to SC and public a shared vision made up of three district areas of priority - policy, curriculum, budget - for the purpose of value oriented decision making.</p> <p>Ensure equity and access to resources.</p> <p>Practice systematic data collection and identify best practices.</p> <p>Replicate best practices for core instruction.</p> <p>Develop organizational structures for vertical and horizontal teaming.</p> <p>Provide structures and support for vertical programming in non-core subjects (ex., district-wide art show, pre k-12 science fair, etc.).</p>

Work Plan 2017-2018

Goals to Begin/Continue	Curriculum Writing, Relationships with Families, Systemic Collaborative Structures and Supports, Alignment, Data Use
Related Initiatives	<p>Provide ongoing anti-bias PD for educators (learn to recognize and value different ways of speaking, learning, thinking, doing).</p> <p>Provide PD on how to build relationships with families and incorporate what we learn into curriculum and instruction.</p> <p>improve the district's teacher evaluation system to create a meaningful, timely, intentional, and manageable process.</p> <p>Tie funds to data/direct funds based on need.</p> <p>Collaboratively design and continually refine written curriculum.</p>

Work Plan 2018-2019

Goals to Complete	Relationships with Families, Data Use
Related Initiatives	<p>Implement public relations campaign to promote home visit program. (Begin making home visits this year.)</p> <p>Include parent leaders in process of outreach.</p> <p>Create a safe, supportive environment for educators to debrief and reflect on home visits, relationships with families, and their own biases; share info with colleagues as appropriate.</p> <p>Develop mechanisms for building teams of educators across disciplines that can collaborate about shared students.</p> <p>Rework schedules across the district to make collaboration around data a core value.</p> <p>Consider standards-based grading K-12.</p> <p>Vertically align expectations of what skills and habits of mind students should have at each grade level.</p> <p>Vertically align homework practices.</p>

Work Plan 2018-2019

Goals to Begin/Continue	Curriculum Writing, Systemic Collaborative Structures and Supports
Related Initiatives	Collaboratively design and continually refine written curriculum.

Work Plan 2019-2020

Goals to Complete	Curriculum Writing, Systemic Collaborative Structures and Supports
Related Initiatives	<p>Fully complete all elements of the written curriculum including differentiated instructional lessons and strategies.</p> <p>Create schedules/structures to support collaboration with ESPs, interventionists, grade level colleagues, vertical teams, special educators, subject area teachers, etc.</p> <p>Structure time during the school day for individual and collaborative reflection to use data to inform instruction for all students and to thoughtfully meet the professional standards for teaching.</p>